DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 463 477 CG 031 638

AUTHOR	Harun, Lily Mastura Haji
TITLE	Rural Social Setting: A Denominator in Functional Self-Concept, Family Concept, and Family Interaction.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	20p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitude Measures; *Coping; *Environmental Influences; *Family Relationship; Foreign Countries; Predictor Variables; *Rural Environment; *Self Concept; Urban Environment; Well Being
IDENTIFIERS	Dysfunctional Behavior; Dysfunctional Family; Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Rurality has often been equated as to being backwards and non-promising to provide for a bright future. This study aims to identify the levels of self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures of subjects from the rural and urban social settings of a state in Malaysia. Six hundred and thirty-nine (or two hundred and thirteen families) Malay subjects were administered the Family Interaction-Humanistic Approach Questionnaire (FIHAQ). Each family unit consists of the father, mother, and an adolescent child of either gender. The results indicated that a significant number of subjects from the rural social setting dominate the functionality continuum as opposed to the subjects from the urban social setting who dominate the dysfunctionality continuum. (Contains 38 references.) (Author/JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 463 477

Rural Social Setting: A Denominator in Functional Self-Concept, Family Concept, and Family Interaction

by

Lily Mastura Haji Harun

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L Harun

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CG031638

Rural Social Setting: A Denominator in Functional Self-Concept, Family Concept, and Family Interaction

Lily Mastura Haji Harun, Ph.D.[1]
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
43400 Serdang
Selangor Darul Ehsan
Malaysia

Abstract

Rurality has often been equated as to being backwards and non-promising to provide for a bright future. This study aims to identify the levels of self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures of subjects from the rural and urban social settings of a state in Malaysia. Six hundred and thirty-nine (or two hundred and thirteen families) Malay subjects were administered the FIHAQ (Lily Mastura Hj. Harun, 1995). Each family unit consists of the father, mother, and an adolescent child of either gender. The results indicated that significant number of subjects from the rural social setting dominate the functionality continuum as opposed to the subjects from the urban social setting dominate the dysfunctionality continuum.

Introduction

According to Champion (1996), efforts directed toward a positive integration of present life situations with cultural values and traditions are necessary. Effects of rurality must also be considered. The characteristics of rurality has been described as less value diversity, a more personal social climate, people are likely to know each other or each other's business and/or be related to each other, a more powerful collective conscience and the operating of more informal social control mechanism, a greater commitment to religious values and a traditionalism vis-à-vis the roles of men and women. Briefly, rurality would be described as being more homogenous than its counterpart – the urbanites (Websdale, 1995).

---

[1] Lily Mastura Haji Harun is currently a lecturer in Counsellor Education and Counselling Psychology with specialization in Marriage and Family Counselling. She has a BA (Hons) in Psychology from the National University of Malaysia, an MA in Counsellor Education and Counselling Psychology from Western Michigan University, United States of America, and a Ph.D. in Family Counselling from Keele University, United Kingdom. E-mail: lily@educ.upm.edu.my.

It has been said that rural parents adhere to myths about self-sufficiency, safety, family life, and community solidarity, myths that are separate and distinct from beliefs and perceptions they have of what family would be in an urban area. Myths about rural places are incorporated into parents' perceptions of their family life, hence enabling them to function at the pace they are comfortable with (Struthers & Bokemeier, 2000).

Gur'ianova (1996) commented that the rural family is the bedrock upon which the spiritual strength of Russia's provinces is built--and even, perhaps, Russia as a whole. The rural family is cemented by religious and moral values and folk traditions. It is in fact still a treasure-house of family heirlooms, family culture, and folk memory. The rural family remains the custodian of the traditions and historical memory of our ancestors and is still rich in terms of kinship ties.

The concept of 'Paternal Home' enable family members to visit their aged parents, help them around the house, letting the grandchildren get acquainted, help with seasonal chores, and assist financially. The relative ease of availability of both small rural lands and of building permits to construct dwellings upon them, means that there is greater emphasis around rural areas to fulfill a family-based rural lifestyle, and greater opportunity for a range of socio-economic groups to experience this lifestyle, than around larger metropolitan centres (Swaffield & Fairweather, 1998).

In another instance, significant influences were found in all aspects of the experiences of rural gifted females. Family support was a major factor. Rural families realized the necessity to prepare their children in society. Therefore, great amount of effort is invested to ensure that youngsters can solve their problems relating to the search for ways out of difficulties. In different ways, each of these families supported the development of their daughters as unique persons. Involvement in school and extracurricular activities also influenced the development of the rural gifted girls. Needless to say that their decisions were influenced by family, experiences and self-perceptions (Battle & Grant, 1995). In this respect, the family is seen as vital. The importance of family in the system of people's life values is increasingly affirmed. People realized the necessity of relying on their own resources in life. Indeed, their striving for self-realization and self-actualization is growing strongly.

The importance of rural living has been described briefly. The family holds a center-stage in the development of personalities and is indeed a sanctuary. Rural living in Malaysia is no different than any other countries but differs in its economic, cultural, social, and religious values. The primary objective of this research is to identify the levels of self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures of subjects from the rural and urban social settings. While the secondary objective of this research is to identify whether any differences exists in the self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures of the subjects with the following intervening variables such as age, gender, family roles, job orientation, duration of marriage, family size, children's level of education, family size, and birth order.

Method

Subjects

The subjects consisted of family units with adolescent children (six hundred and thirty-nine Malay individuals). Within each family included in the research, both parents and an adolescent child of either gender were recruited. They were sampled randomly within the township vicinity of a state in Malaysia both from the rural (107 families) and urban (106 families) setting of various socio-economic statuses (see Table 1). Eight research assistants visited each household to administer the questionnaires to the family.

Table 1: **Subjects' Demographic Information**

	Age (yr)			**Income (RM)**			**Family Size (siblings)**			
	13 - 20	*26 - 40*	*41 - 55*	< 1000	> 1000	Not working	*1 - 3*	*4 - 6*	*7 - 9*	> *10*
Father		*79*	*134*	153	60	-				
Mother		*152*	*61*	24	26	163				
Son	*97*									
Daughter	*116*						*43*	*112*	*44*	*14*

N = 639 individuals/213 families

Instrument

The FIHAQ (Family Interaction - Humanistic Approach Questionnaire) were administered. FIHAQ consisted of an adaptation of the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (SCS) (Chiam, 1976), Family Concept Scale (FCS) (Lily Mastura Hj. Harun, 1995), and Family Interaction Scale (FIS) (Lily Mastura Hj. Harun, 1995). SCS is a 50-item questionnaire and consists of five sub-scales namely: physical-health, family, emotion, social, and ethical-religious. SCS has a reliability of .85 with reliabilities of .75, .75, .76, .75, and .78 for the respective sub-scales. FCS is a 68-item questionnaire comprising of two parts namely; the Real Family Concept Scale and the Ideal Family Concept Scale with reliabilities of .84 and .85 respectively. FIS is an 82-item questionnaire with sub-scales namely: general functioning, awareness, communication, and system-maintenance. FIS has a reliability of .98 with reliabilities of .92, .87, .89, and .87 for the respective sub-scales. These instruments were selected as it has been constructed and tested within the Malaysian community.

Results

Data were analyzed both in the individual as well as the family data sets when appropriate. Based on the individual data set, the SCS had a highest raw score of 184 and the lowest raw score of 107. The SCS has a mean (M) of 151.21 and a standard deviation (σ) of 12.10. With this M and + 1 σ, 114 individuals were categorized as having high self-concepts (105 from the rural setting) while, - 1 σ, 112 individuals were categorized as having low self-concepts (106 from the urban setting). While the family data set had a highest raw score of 181 and a lowest raw score of 110. The M was 151.28 while the σ was 10.00. With this mean + 1 σ, 33 families were categorized as having high self-concepts (30 from the rural setting) while - 1 σ, 20 families as having low self-concepts (15 from urban setting). In this case, rural cases seem to dominate functionality while urban cases dominate dysfunctionality.

The individual data set of the FCS had a highest raw score of 272 while the lowest raw score was 146. The FCS had a M of 229.61 and a σ of 25.31. With + 1 σ, 122 individuals have high levels of family interaction (69 individuals from the rural setting) while - 1 σ, 11 individuals have low levels of family functioning (10 individuals from the urban setting). When FCS scores were calculated for family units, the FCS measure had

a highest raw score of 272 and the lowest raw score of 161. The family unit FCS had a M of 229.91 and a σ of 19.31. With + 1 σ, 40 families have high levels of family interaction (26 families from the rural setting) while with - 1 σ, there are 37 families with low levels of family interaction (19 of them were from the urban setting).

The individual data set of the FIS had a highest raw score of 314 while the lowest raw score was 188. The FIS had a M of 253.32 and a σ of 25.41. With + 1 σ, 131 individuals have high levels of family interaction (122 individuals from the rural setting) while - 1 σ, 123 individuals have low levels of family functioning (114 individuals from the urban setting). When FIS scores were calculated for family units, the FIS measure had a highest raw score of 309 and the lowest raw score of 208. The family unit FIS had a M of 252.77 and a σ of 20.72. With + 1 σ, 34 families have high levels of family interaction (29 families from the rural setting) while with - 1 σ, there are 13 families with low levels of family interaction (10 of them were from the urban setting). It is again indicated that the rural individuals have better family interaction as compared to the urbanites (see Table 2).

Table 2: **Distribution of Subjects on the Functionality Continuum**

	Functional		**Dysfunctional**	
	Urban	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Rural**
SCS (individuals)	9	105	106	6
SCS (families)	3	30	15	5
FCS (individuals)	53	69	10	1
FCS (families)	14	26	19	18
FIS (individuals)	9	122	114	9
FIS (families)	5	29	10	3

Independent groups t-tests and ANOVA were performed to seek differences in self-concept, family concept, and family interaction measures when appropriate. A list of demographic variables (age, gender, social setting, family roles, job orientation, duration

of marriage, family size, and children's level of education, family size, and birth order) was tested to seek their differences on self-concept, family concept, and family interaction. The findings indicated only minimal differences on self-concept and family interaction and no differences on the family concept scale. Comparison of the mean self-concepts for urban parents (149.42) with that for rural parents (152.07) produced a statistically significant result, t (424) = -2.28, $p < .05$, indicating that rural parents have better self-concepts to that of the urban parents. The mean self-concepts for professional working mothers (153.27) with that for non-professional working mothers (143.91) were found to be statistically significant, t (47) = 3.13, $p < .05$. This indicates that professional working mothers have better self-concepts to the non-professional working mothers. The mean family interaction measures for urban children (247.35) with that for rural children (255. 47) were found to be statistically significant, t (211) = -2.36, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that rural children have better family interaction to that of urban children. Using ANOVA, the mean family interaction measures of the children were found to be statistically significant with the number of siblings they have. It was, F (3, 209) = 3.47, $p < .05$. This finding suggests that number of siblings affects family interaction measures of the children. Children with more than 10 siblings (256.89) had a significantly greater family interaction measures as compared to children having less than three siblings (240.84). While for children having 4 to 5 siblings (253.12) did not differ as much with children having 7 to 9 siblings (253.36).

Discussion

The results indicated that individuals (children and parents alike) from the rural social setting have higher levels of functioning in comparison to their counter-parts. The differences in these measures can be attributed to the fact that rural individuals feel more at ease with themselves, their environment, family life, and being away from the hassles and demands of urban life. Rural life in Malaysia can still be pictured in the traditional life-styles, with *kampong* (village) style houses which are relatively big and spacious in size, spacious land area for planting plants or food and fruit trees and for recreational activities for the family. There are still many greens in the *kampongs*, thus pollution is less of a problem. This will surely endow satisfactory levels of physical health. The tranquility of *kampong* life is much sought nowadays when people are tired of 'rushing'

into towns and cities to make ends meet. Socially, *kampong* life is still a close-knitted family and community. Family values are safeguarded especially with religious education playing an important role to avoid moral decay. It has been noticed that families from rural settings are more polite and observe their respects and honours towards one another especially to the elders. Almost everybody knows everyone else in the *kampong* and people are friendlier than urban dwellers. Melton and Hargrove (1987) have this to say about rural living, rural scenes are substantially more likely than urban scenes to be described in pleasant terms and that rural people are more likely to be perceived as friendly. As opposed to urban dwellers, they are commonly attributed to purposeless activity, idling or loitering in towns. There are quite common scenes in cities and towns in Malaysia to see school children still in their school uniforms in towns late in the evening, or to see youngsters and teenagers 'killing time' aimlessly, wandering the streets, not knowing what to do but to 'disturb the public'.

In the Malay society, rural or urban, traditional or modern, the mosque and/or *surau* (pray houses) and the *imam* (the leader who leads the religious affairs), are central to the life of the community (more so for the rural community). These two features (the mosque and *imam*) are visible during the Friday congregational prayers, the observance of eids, the commemoration of the birth of the Prophet (PBUH), the remembrance of the ascension to heaven by the Prophet (PBUH) and other religious occasions as well as social matters like betrothal, wedding, circumcision, thanksgiving or sending kinsmen off to Mecca. The *imam* plays a leading role, mainly because these occasions would touch on religious expressions at one point or another. The *imam* is the tail end of Islamic religious administration in the Malay society (Syed Husin Ali, 1975; Gullick, 1989; Mohd. Taib Osman, 1989) and today seems to be more of an important figure in the rural community relegating the sense of esprit de corps. Thus, religious life in the rural setting seems to be relatively more stable hence rural population would feel more at peace in mind, body, and soul.

Hence, with sound physical health, strong religious commitments, appropriate social milieu, secured emotions, and relatively stable family environment have contributed to better mental health for the rural individuals and their families. On the other hand, van Hook (1990) reported that the strong sense of individualism and pride

associated with rural life-style serves to inhibit the pursuit of assistance from the extended family or community. This might not be true for the Malay community especially for the *kampong* people because as mentioned earlier they still maintain a close-knitted family as well as supportive community systems.

There are also other findings indicating that rural people are increasingly displaying symptoms of hypersensitivity, tension, and depression (Lindhomm, 1986), and that a major mediator of depression is family dynamics (Codington, 1979; Garrison, Schoenbach, Schluchter, & Kaplan, 1987; Wetzel, 1984). This is taken to be consistent with Coleman, Ganong, Clark, and Marsden (1989) findings that suggested while rural families bestow upon youth much strength, and features of the family might increase their susceptibility to depressive symptoms. The condition above is quite consistent with the findings of this research as there are individuals from the rural social setting in the dysfunctional continuum. This means that there might be individuals and family that are not as strong as they are. Fearing this hence warrants attention. Qualities of rural family life need to be enhanced. Sarigiani, Wilson, Petersen, and Vicary (1990) suggested that the community context, may it be urban or rural may influence the nature of personality development.

For urban individuals, they are especially concern with their physical health. Urban dwellers are closely associated with office work, which demands them to be in office from 8.00 o'clock in the morning to 4.30 in the afternoon. The morning rush hours are enough to start the day, with duties starting from sending the children to school and be stuck in traffic jams and pollutions. From the heat of the road, with lots of fumes from motor vehicles plus little greenery in towns and cities have reduced the quality of life of an individual. The intensity of heat on the roads in Malaysia is most of the time unbearable, keeping in view that Malaysia has an equatorial climate. From massive heat to sudden cold of the air-conditioning of the offices makes the physical body vulnerable to pains and ailments. The reverse takes place when office hours are over, from cold to massive heat again. The afternoon rush hours are even worst with temperature at its peak and the heat of the roads and pollutions intensified. With little hour left for the day, recreational activities seem impossible and weekend is days for cleaning up the house. Hence, there is no doubt that the urban parents perceived their physical health to be poor.

With such tight schedules, urban individuals do not have enough time to socialize in the community nor sometimes to the immediate neighbour. Next-door neighbour can be a 'complete stranger'. To be involved and committed to religious activities are also seen as impossible acts and sometimes the tight schedules are taken as excuses for not getting involved. It can be said urban and city people are less religious than rural people. With such prevailing conditions, they would naturally feel abated - they perceived themselves as emotionally unstable. The only consolation for urban people is their family. Amidst all the above, they still have a family to go home to, at least to have their last meal of the day together and to share the least of time left before another day begins.

With such a contrast existing situation between the urban and the rural social settings, then it is not surprising that most functional individuals (may it be in perceiving themselves or their family and family interaction) are likely to be found in the rural setting while the least functional people are found in the urban setting. It can be suggested that rural values and environment can contribute to stable mental health and less of conflicting situations.

Individuals from the rural setting reported their family concept and family interactions to be more satisfying than those of the urbanites. This could be well true because earlier we have seen that their self-concepts are better than their urban counterparts. Thus the connection is - having functional individuals lead to functional interactions within the family. According to Bhushan and Shirali, (1992, 1993), high identity or functional subjects can best be understood in terms of the family (parents) as the locus of the growth context. They went further to say that functional individuals belonged to balanced families (stable parents) hence experiencing more openness and fewer problems in communicating with their parents. While Stone (1993) suggested that success and growth in a relationship require a balance between self (autonomy) and others (intimacy and closeness). The metaphor of balance between the self and the system suggest a way of looking at the goals of the self and those of others. The findings above implied that when one party is stable, balanced, and functional, they are more than likely able to generate even better relationships with other people, and this seems to be true in this research.

The reasons for this satisfactory interaction could be accounted for in part to the setting or environment itself. As discussed earlier, the rural setting has a lot to offer (Melton & Hargrove, 1987). It still upholds the traditional *kampong* life-style with recreational activities stretching from fishing, playing tree-houses, games that one can never think of making with the resources that's available in the surrounding environment or even climbing trees which are opportunities not provided for urban children. The activities are all possible because of the spacious land area as well as the big and spacious *kampong* houses. There is no overcrowding in the *kampongs*.

It is also noted that rural families are still close-knitted and to some extend still practice the extended-family system. Hence, family support is still available even if both parents have to go out to work. As such, children are seldom left on their own but in the watchful eyes of their relatives. In such a manner, family values are safeguarded and it is reflected in their mannerisms. Religious education is given great emphasis thus ensuring them to be on the right track and able to be more tolerant and compromising in dealing with other people. It is also known that *kampong* is still a safe place. With such security, gives access to the individuals the freedom to explore the environment and thus getting the satisfaction in interaction. In fact, according to Ward (1986) rural population, especially youth are insulated from stress or other exacerbatory elements that underlie depressive symptomatology. Woodward and Frank (1988) and Witt (1989) noted that rural adolescents, as compared to their urban peers appear generally more independent and isolated with an internal locus of control.

Another contributing factor to satisfactory family interaction is that the rural family size is most often very big. Hence, the atmosphere of a 'real family' is there - 'family' means many people and many siblings. When there are many people or sibling, then interaction is possible. This could have some historical background as well as religious reasons to it. As in the early days, *kampong* people were usually related to agriculture; hence, hands were needed to operate the farms. Seldom do we find rural people having less than four children - as they say it, 'the more the merrier'. From a religious perspective, it is *haram* (forbidden) to practice family planning unless the mother is truly very sick to have more children. Thus, *kampong* people being religious adhered to it and hence explain their big family size.

As for the urban individuals, they were least than happy and satisfied with their family interaction. The urban environment has a lot to do with this. First and foremost, not only do their parents reported of having low self concept, pressurized by the demands of life, the children were affected as well in their family interaction. With fewer amenities, except the four walls of their houses or their rooms, their activities are very much restricted. The housing development projects in the urban or town centers are very much compact unless one is very rich to afford an 'estate'. The houses for average income earners up until the upper middle class are confined and compact. They have access to terrace houses or to the most semi-detached houses. With such housing conditions and a little or in fact tiny land area to play in, not much can be expected from it. This lack of space plus no privacy among family members makes it difficult to initiate satisfactory interaction. What most adolescents would do and as observed, they would rather stay away from home until its dusk, then its time to go home. Adolescents would be more 'alive' to be outside their home, meeting their peers doing purposeless activities (Melton & Hargrove, 1987) and pronounced 'dead' upon arrival at home. They would just refuse to communicate and most of the time shut themselves up in their rooms. Another point to note is that the children were in their adolescent stage - a stage marked by many difficulties: the identity crisis, the shifting of parent-child relationships, and the refocus on midlife marital and career issues. It would be fair to say that parent and children at this stage are quite overwhelmed by the changes that need their attention.

The situation can be even worse when both parents are working. The whole family goes out in the morning into three separate directions, and one of them (the child) returns home in the afternoon to an empty house (if they are an only child) or return home to a house full of children without an adult to manage them. In either case, it is not what the children wanted. It is no surprise to find young latchkey children having their own house keys, just like an adult. Babysitters, nannies, or house cleaners are scarce features nowadays in modern Malaysia with the exception of imported house cleaners. The local women would prefer to work outside the home in unskilled or semi-skilled employment, a bonus to personal freedom rather than be 'cooked-up' in the house as house cleaners attending to the trivial needs of the children.

Family size is also another consideration that affects family interaction. Even though Muslims are forbidden to practice family planning, the 'modern' couple would always opt to have few children. As a result, it is quite common to find couples in the urban settings having as few as two or the most four children. With too few siblings to go round with, and parents not available until late evening, it is no wonder that interaction is minimal. However, it was seen earlier that the individual awareness sub-scale is relatively higher for urban individuals. This might suggests that despite the fact that interaction is least happening, parents do still take an interest in the children's individual development. Alternatively, sometimes, parents will perform things that they think the children will appreciate them - like sending them to arts classes, piano lessons, martial arts classes, and others. By doing so, not only to build the children's interests but also to make sure that the children is somewhere safe and doing something useful and 'prestigious'. This situation is unlikely for the rural children.

Thus the discussion above suggests that place of residence does to a great extend contribute to the differences of self-concept, family concept, and family interaction. It may be that there is nothing much that can be done by families living in the urban setting, but efforts can be made to improve the quality of life for the family itself. But then again, the urban parents already feel low towards themselves, so something has to be done to boost their self-concept. They need to enrich their lives holistically, feel good about themselves thus interacting in a manner that will make the children appreciate themselves as well the family.

Stokes and Peyton (1986), Hennon (1992), Bala and Lakshmir (1992), Sheeran and McCarthy (1992) and Stake (1992) commented that type of work orientation is a concern for working mothers. Professional working mothers seemed to have better self-concepts in comparison to non-professional working mothers. Professional working mothers have above average scores on all the four scales with the exception of the ethical-religious sub-scale. Being professionally sound and with high incomes seem to provide security and 'buy' happiness. They have sound physical health, social, family, and emotional environment. Amidst these, they seem to shrink their responsibilities towards ethical and religious commitments. Life is filled with too much of 'worldly and material demands' and demands for life after death can be postponed to a later date.

People would think of going to the mosque, learn about the religion, and try to make most of what is left in later parts of their life. However, God has this to say, from *Sura 'Asr* (Time through the Ages):

> *"By (the token of) time (through the ages), verily man is in loss, except such as have faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of truth, and of patience and constancy"*
> (103: 1-3, Qur'an).

Almost all people seem to take this attitude - preparation for life after death is after all their worldly responsibilities have been fulfilled by which time might be too late. From *Sura Luqman* (The Wise):

> *"O my son! Establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong; and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs. And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster. And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass"*
> (31: 17-19, Qur'an).

Non-professional working mothers reported very low scores on the family, then emotion, social, ethical-religious, and physical health sub-scales (all scores below the mean). It can be said that being very involved in their work to make ends meet, has drained their energy to have a proper relationship with their family. Family can sometimes be viewed as a nuisance and too demanding or tawdry. It does not make them feel emotionally or socially safe too, as life has been directed toward making money for the family. To cushion-off these feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, they resort to religion to make them feel better and at ease to face life's uncertainties. In fact, this is what most people would do, as narrated in *Sura Nahl* (The Bee):

> *"And ye have no good thing, but is from God; and moreover when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans; yet, when He removes the distress from you, behold! Some of you turn to other gods - to join their Lord -; (as if) to show their ingratitude for the favours We have bestowed on them! then enjoy (your brief day); but soon will ye know (your folly)!"*
> (16: 53-55, Qur'an).

The *ayats* above clearly indicate that people seek refuge in God when they are in trouble, and when their needs and prayers are answered; they tend to lax on the existence

of God. In fact, Hall (1986) draws some tentative conclusions about the relationship between crisis and spiritual growth. Accordingly, crisis conditions appear to be necessary condition for the more dramatic rates of spiritual growth, and spiritual values influence behaviour in positive, life-enhancing ways: where a person placed a high priority on the expression of spiritual values through everyday life, functioning and life-satisfaction improved. It was also found that although some family members reported a strong focus on spiritual values in their lives and no crisis conditions, the depth of spiritual orientation did not appear to be as great, or the influence of spirituality as pervasive in their lives, as for those who had consciously reoriented their values and beliefs in order to surmount crises, survive, and live more fully. When incorporating religious or spiritual values enhances a person's life, it eases the daily decision-making process (Tillich, 1952).

Despite all these, from the Islamic point of view, a person is directed not to compare himself or herself with others, may it be in wealth, beauty, intelligence, occupation, property, family, etc. Comparing oneself with others will cause frustration, despair, envy, and jealousy. These will eventually lead to anxieties and depression (Abdul Hayy Alawi, 1992). This point has been emphasized through numerous *ayats* as follows:

from *Sura Nisaa* (The Women) is stated:

> *"And in no wise covet those things in which God hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn; but ask God of His bounty for God hath full knowledge of all things"*
> (4: 32, Qur'an);

from *Sura Jathiya* (Bowing the Knee):

> *"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect"*
> (45: 13, Qur'an);

from *Sura Fatir* (The Originator of Creation):

> *"O men! Call to mind the grace of God unto you! is there a Creator, other than God, to give you sustenance from heaven or earth?; there is no God but He, how then ye deluded away from the truth"*
> (35: 3, Qur'an); and

from *Sura Mu-min* (The Believer):

"Verily God is full of grace and bounty to men; yet most men give no thanks" (40: 61, Qur'an).

Thus, though differences exist between the professional and non-professional working mothers (and with low score on the ethical-religious scale), it is suggested that it would better be viewed from the religious (Islamic) perspective. Men are created equal and there is nothing that makes one person better or lesser than the other if one belief in the same God and practice its teachings. Being professionally sound or unsound is not a criterion of recognition in the eyes of God. Islam teaches the sanctity of human personality and confers equal rights upon all without any distinction of race, colour, and creed.

Conclusion

Can it be concluded that rurality reigns mental health in family functioning? Is there enough evidence from this research? Rural social setting, as mentioned in the discussion, is stable, calm, and able to provide a lot of harmony to the souls of men and women. Is this research trying to say that modernization and urbanization have brought upon us disaster and malaise? The family is said to be in a state of dilemma (Ogburn, 1938; Winch & Goodman, 1968; Leslie, 1979). Are the urban families in this state of dilemma? And as Edwards (1969) puts it, both in terms of structure and function, the family (especially in the urban social setting) under the impetus of social change is comparatively small, has fewer functions, and is relatively isolated. It is, in short, a stripped-down model. It is also said that the process of social change brought along contradicting opinions regarding its effects and consequences towards the family system. Some have argued that change is for the better, signifying progress towards human happiness. Others have pointed out the destructive and degenerating effects of change, as new anxieties and economic insecurities, new frustrations and hopeless wishes have grown faster than their means of satisfaction (Edwards, 1969). The family in the twentieth-century is described by (Sorokin, 1941, p. 776) as,

> *"A sacred union of husband and wife, of parents and children, will continue to disintegrate. Divorce and separation will increase until any profound difference between socially sanctioned marriages and illicit sex relationship disappears. Children will be separated earlier and earlier from their parents. The main socio-cultural functions of the family will further decrease until the family*

becomes a mere cohabitation of male and female while the house will become a mere overnight parking place, mainly for sex-relationship".

References

Abdul Hayy Alawi (1992). The Qur'anic concept of mental health. In Zafar Afaq Ansari (ed.), *Qur'anic concepts of human psyche, 87-98.* Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

Bala, M. & Lakshmir, D. (1992). Perceived self in educated employed and educated unemployed women. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 38(4),* 257-261.

Battle, D. A. & Grant, D. F. (1995). Decision making of rural gifted females: Case studies in precollege influences. *Roeper Review, 18(1),* 33-38.

Bhushan, R. & Shirali, K. A. (1992). Family types and communication with parents: A comparison of youth at different identity levels. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 1(6),* 687-697.

Bhushan, R. & Shirali, K. A. (1993). Identity and family functioning link: An investigation of Indian youth. *Psychologia - An International Journal of Psychology in the Orient, 36(4),* 266-271.

Champion, J. D. (1996). Women abuse, assimilation, and self-concept in a rural Mexican American community. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioural Sciences, 18(4),* 508-521.

Chiam, K. S. (1976). *The adaptation of the Tennessee Self Concept.* Unpublished manuscript.

Codington, R.D. (1979). Life events associated with adolescent pregnancies. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 40,* 180-185.

Coleman, M., Ganong, L. H., Clark, J. M., & Marsden, R. (1989). Parenting perceptions in rural and urban families: Is there a difference. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51,* 329-335.

Edwards, J. N. (ed.) (1969). *The Family and Change.* New York: Knopf Pub.

Garrison, C. Z., Schoenbach, V. J., Schluchter, M. D., & Kaplan, B. H. (1987). Life events in early adolescence. *Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 26,* 865-872.

Gullick, J. M. (1989). *Malay society in the late nineteenth-century.* Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Gur'ianova, M. R. (1996). Society and the rural family. *Russian Social Science Review, 37(3),* 66-76.

Hall, C. M. (1986). Crisis as opportunity for spiritual growth. *Journal of Religion and Health, 25(1)*, 8-17.

Hennon, C. B. (1992). Toward the turn of the century. Special issue: Toward the turn of the century: Families and economic realities. *Journal of Family and the Economic Issues, 13(4)*, 355-372.

Leslie, G. R. (1979). *The family in a social context*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lily Mastura Hj. Harun (1995). *Dimensions and types of Malay family interaction: A humanistic approach*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Keele University, Staffordshire, United Kingdom.

Lindhomm, P. (1986). Farm children require more understanding: Survey reveals. *Kansas State Collegian*, October 10, 3.

Melton G. B. & Hargrove, D. S. (1987). Perceptions of rural and urban communities. *Journal of Rural Community, 8(2),* 3-13.

Mohd. Taib Osman (1989). *Malay folk beliefs: An integration of disparate elements*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Ogburn, W. F. (1938). The changing family. *The Family, 19*, 139-143.

Sarigiani, P. A., Wilson, J. L., Petersen, A. C., & Vicary, J. R. (1990). Self-image and educational plans of adolescents from two contrasting communities. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 10(1)*, 37-55.

Sheeran, P. & McCarthy, E. (1992). Social structure, self-conception, and well-being: An examination of four models with unemployed people. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 22(2)*, 117-133.

Sorokin, P. A. (1941). *Social and cultural dynamics*. New York: American Book Co.

Stake, J. E. (1992). Gender differences and similarities of self-concept within everyday life contexts. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 16(3),* 349- 363.

Stone, M. H. (1993). Balancing the self with the marital system. Special issue: Marriage and couples counselling. *Individual Psychology Journal of Adlerian Theory - Research and Practice, 49(3-4),* 392-398.

Stokes, J. P. & Peyton, J. S. (1986). Attitudinal differences between full-time homemakers and women who work outside the home. *Sex Roles, 15(5-6),* 299-310.

Struthers, C. B. & Bokemeier, J. L. (2000). Myths and realities of raising children and creating family life in a rural county. *Journal of Family Issues, 21(1),* 17-46.

Swaffield, S. & Fairweather, J. (1998). In search of Arcadia: The persistence of the rural idyll. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 41(1),* 111-127.

Syed Husin Ali (1975). *Malay peasant society and leadership.* Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Tillich, P. (1952). *The courage to be.* New York: The Fontana Library.

van Hook, M. (1990). Family response to the farm crisis: A study in coping. *Social Work, 35,* 425- 431.

Ward, S. L. (1986). Rural isolation: The need for information. *Educational Considerations, 13,* 32-34.

Websdale, N. (1995). Rural women abuse. *Violence Against Women, 1(4),* 309-338.

Wetzel, J. W. (1984). *Clinical handbook of depression.* New York: Gardner.

Witt, L. A. (1989). Urban - nonurban differences in social cognitions, locus of control, and perceptions of a just world. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 129,* 715-717.

Winch, R. F. & Goodman, L. W. (1968). *Selected studies in marriage and the family.* New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston Inc.

Woodward, J. C. & Frank, B. D. (1988). Rural adolescent loneliness and coping strategies. *Adolescence, 23,* 559-565.